BEFORE THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF MONTANA Polly M. Bosch,) HRC Case No. 9201005315 Charging Party, Hearing Examiner's versus Decision **Limelight, Inc., and Professional Hotel** and Motel Management, Inc., formerly d/b/a EconoLodge/Limelight, Martin **Anderson**, individually, as President of Limelight, Inc. and as a corporate officer of Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc., Nainesh K. Patel, individually, as President of Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc., and as secretary of Limelight, Inc.,) Respondents.

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I. Procedure and Preliminary Matters

Polly M. Bosch filed a verified complaint with the Montana Human Rights Commission on June 2, 1992. She filed an amended complaint on January 31, 1994, and a second amended complaint on October 18, 1996. She alleged, in her second amended complaint, that respondents discriminated against her in her employment on the basis of her sex (pregnant female). On October 30, 1996, the Commission certified her complaint for a contested case hearing and appointed Terry Spear as hearing examiner.

On March 28, 1997, Bosch moved to compel complete and non-evasive responses to discovery. The hearing examiner granted that motion and ordered complete and non-evasive answers filed, by Anderson and Patel, on or before July 8, 1997, leaving open the possibility of further sanctions if respondents failed to comply. That order issued on July 2, 1997, following a telephonic conference in which the hearing examiner told counsel the contents of the order. Bruce L. Hussey, attorney of record for Anderson and Patel, specifically advised the hearing examiner during that conference that his clients could and would file the responses by July 8, 1997. The hearing examiner deferred further consideration of sanctions until after the responses were timely made.

Anderson and Patel did not file the responses. Anderson and Patel did not file any request for extension, motion for reconsideration, notice of bankruptcy, or any other document. On July 17, 1997, Bosch served, by mail, her motion for additional sanctions for failure to obey the previous order. She served her supporting brief by mail on July 23, 1997. Anderson and Patel had until August 7, 1997, to respond. 24.9.320(3) A.R.M. Anderson and Patel did not file any brief opposing the motion for further sanctions. They did not file any kind of response at all.

The hearing officer then issued an order (1) to bar Anderson and Patel from asserting defenses that depend upon the discovery responses sought; (2) to bar Anderson and Patel from calling witnesses or offering evidence that the discovery responses should have revealed; (3) to deem admitted the requests for admission to which Anderson and Patel have either not responded or inadequately responded, and (4) to leave open for Bosch the opportunity to seek a summary ruling on all or any part of the pending complaint. Anderson and Patel did not challenge the order or take any action in response to it.

Bosch moved for partial summary judgment. The hearing examiner granted partial summary judgment in favor of Bosch against Patel and Anderson, that both of them, individually and as officers of Limelight, Inc. and Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc. (formerly d/b/a EconoLodge/Limelight), discriminated against Bosch because of her sex (female, pregnant female), violating §§49-2-303(1)(a) and 310(1) MCA. Patel and Anderson did not challenge the order or take any action in response to it.

The contested case hearing on the complaint, with partial summary judgment and sanctions already ordered, began on November 11, 1997, in Missoula, Montana, at the law office of the attorney for Bosch. Bosch was present with Joan Jonkel, her attorney. Respondents' attorney, Bruce L. Hussey appeared to represent all respondents: Limelight, Inc. ("Limelight"); Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc. (formerly d/b/a EconoLodge/Limelight) ("PHMM"); and the two individual respondents Martin Anderson and Nainesh K. Patel.¹

¹ The hearing examiner dismissed former respondent Fisher Enterprises, Inc., on July 1, 1997.

Hearing concluded on November 11, 1997. Bosch filed her written closing argument on December 18, 1997. Respondents did not file any closing argument, so the record closed.

During the hearing, the following exhibits were offered and either accepted or refused:

ExhibitDescription		Offered by	Objections	Admitted/Refused
1	Bosch's charges filed with HRC	Bosch	None	Admitted
2	Respondent's response to claim	Bosch	None	Admitted
3	Bosch responsive letters/rebuttals	Bosch	None	Admitted
8	Missoula bus. lic. for Limelight	Bosch	None	Admitted
9	Missoula bus. lic. for Econolodge	Bosch	None	Admitted
10	City bus. lic. appl. for both	Bosch	None	Admitted
11	State liq. lic. appl. for Limelight	Bosch	None	Admitted
13	Bankruptcy docket	Bosch	Foundation	Refused
14	Damage summary worksheet	Bosch	None	Admitted

The witnesses appearing and testifying were charging party Polly Bosch, her son, Justin Lewis, and her friend, Margaret Olson. No witnesses appeared for any respondent. No designated representative, other than counsel, appeared or attended for respondents. The individual respondents, Anderson and Patel, did not attend, and appeared only through counsel.

II. Issues

A full statement of issues appears in the final prehearing order (November 11, 1997). Before signing the final prehearing order, Bosch renewed her motion for entry of default against the respondents, for failure to file prehearing statements, failure to respond adequately to discovery requests and failure to comply with orders compelling discovery and imposing sanctions. Bosch also moved to exclude any evidence of any bankruptcy proceedings. Respondents objected to the Commission's jurisdiction, on the grounds that the Bankruptcy Court had exclusive and continuing jurisdiction. The parties, though counsel, agreed that the bankruptcy petition was filed before Bosch filed her initial Human Rights Act complaint, and that Bosch's claims were still pending before the Commission when the bankruptcy estate was distributed, the trustee relieved, and the bankruptcy case closed. The parties also agreed, through counsel, that Bosch's notice or lack of it regarding the bankruptcy was a question solely of actual knowledge, and that she was never identified as a creditor or claimant in the bankruptcy and was never on the bankruptcy mailing list.

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At the close of the hearing, while scheduling briefs, respondents' counsel stated on the record that he, for respondents, withdrew the bankruptcy issues. Counsel thus withdrew the challenge to the jurisdiction of the Commission. The only issues for decision are the two issues of fact stated in the prehearing order:

- 1. For what corporations were the individual respondents acting when discriminating against charging party in employment based on her sex and retaliating against her?
- 2. What measures are required to correct any harm, pecuniary or otherwise, to the charging party because of the illegal discrimination?

Final Prehearing Order, p.4, ls. 21-25.

The issue of law, "Are the claims of charging party barred as against one or more of the respondents because of the bankruptcy of Professional Hotel & Motel Management, Inc.," Final Prehearing Order, p. 5, lines 1-3, has been eliminated.²

III. Findings of Fact

- 1. The facts determined by the sanctions order are repeated here as facts:
- "A. As against Anderson, the following matters of fact are deemed admitted, and require no additional proof:
 - 1) Bosch was employed and satisfactorily performed her work at the Limelight Nightclub and Lounge and Econolodge from 1-7-91 until 3-21-92;
 - 2) On at least one occasion, in March of 1992, Anderson told Bosch, who was five months pregnant, that she looked like she was ready to deliver;
 - 3) Anderson knew in 1992 that Bosch had filed Montana Human Rights Act charges against Limelight and Econolodge;
 - 4) Anderson knew in 1994 that Bosch had filed amended Montana Human Rights Act charges against Limelight, Econologge and Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc.;
 - 5) Patel hired Bosch at Limelight/Econolodge on or about 1-7-91;
 - 6) Limelight, Inc., and Professional Hotel & Motel Management, dba Econolodge, operated with two different payrolls, paying employees working at the 1609 West Broadway, Missoula, Montana, location on checks issued by both Limelight, Inc. and Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc., between 1-7-91 and 3-21-92;
 - 7) Male Limelight bartender Doug Garrison wore clothing other than the Limelight uniform of tuxedo shirt, black pants and bow tie;

² In addition to abandoning their bankruptcy defenses, respondents have exhausted them. *See*, Finding No. 4, *including* footnote 3.

1	8) When manager Lee Cox terminated Bosch, Anderson refused to discuss the termination with Bosch, stating Cox was in charge;			
3	9) Bosch worked only five shifts on the reservations desk at Econolodge and two shifts behind the bar at Limelight from 3-11-92, to 3-21-92;			
4	10) Bosch stated to Cox in March of 1992 that she wanted to work up until the time she delivered her baby.			
5	B. As against Patel, the following matters of fact are deemed admitted, and require no			
6	additional proof:			
7	1) Bosch was employed and satisfactorily performed her work at the Limelight Nightclub and Lounge and Econolodge from 1-7-91 until 3-21-92;			
9	2) Patel knew in 1992 that Bosch had filed Montana Human Rights Act charges against Limelight and Econolodge;			
10	3) Patel knew in 1994 that Bosch had filed amended Montana Human Rights Act			
11	charges against Limelight, Econolodge and Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc.;			
12	4) Lee Cox was employed as a manager of Limelight Nightclub and Lounge and			
13	Econolodge in March of 1992;			
14	5) Patel hired Bosch as a bartender on or about 1-7-91;			
15	6) Limelight, Inc., and Professional Hotel & Motel Management, dba Econolodge, operated with two different payrolls, paying employees working at the 1609 West Broadway, Missoula, Montana, location on checks issued by both			
16	Limelight, Inc. and Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc., between 1-7-91 and 3-21-92;			
17 18	7) Anderson was directly involved in the management of Limelight, Inc. and Econolodge in March of 1992;			
19	8) Anderson supervised Cox;			
20	9) Bosch worked only five shifts on the reservations desk at Econolodge and two shifts behind the bar at Limelight from 3-11-92 to 3-21-92;			
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22	10) Bosch stated to Cox in March of 1992 that she wanted to work up until the time she delivered her baby.			
23	According to the partial summary judgment in favor of charging party, respondents			
24	Anderson and Patel did discriminate against charging party in her employment by reason of her sex, and did retaliate against her."			
25	Final Prehearing Order, pp. 2, line 16 through p. 4, line 16.			
26	2. Nainesh Patel was the president of PHMM according to the license application filed			
27	with the City of Missoula on May 18, 1993 (Exhibit 10). According to that same document,			
28	PHMM owned Econolodge (the motel), and Limelight owned the nightclub ("Limelight			

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Nightclub" on the application). The other business license records (Exhibits 8 and 9) show a series of owners and operators, with no clear indication of who owned and operated the nightclub or the motel at any given time, either before or after 1993.

- 3. The liquor license application (Exhibit 11) identifies Limelight as the owner of the nightclub, with Martin Anderson as the president and sole shareholder and Patel as the vicepresident of the corporation. This information applies from August 1992 through August 1993.
- 4. PHMM filed a Chapter 11 petition pursuant to the United States Bankruptcy Code on or about January 29, 1992. Case No. 92-30129-11, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of Montana. That proceeding commenced before Bosch's Human Rights Act claim was filed. That proceeding also concluded before the hearing here. "Motion to Reopen," filed by Debtor Professional Hotel & Motel Management, Nov. 7, 1997.³ Bosch was never named as a creditor nor given notice of the pendency of that petition. Testimony of Bosch. She had no actual knowledge of that proceeding until her attorney told her of the bankruptcy, at some time after she hired her attorney here. Bosch did not understand a reference, in Limelight's March 10, 1994, letter to the Human Rights Commission staff (CP's exhibit 2, fourth page, letter to Teresa Graham), to "a Chapter 11 Trustee" as showing the pendency of a bankruptcy. Testimony of Bosch. Bosch therefore never had, during the pendency of the bankruptcy, any knowledge sufficient to require her to take action to preserve her claim in the bankruptcy.
- 5. Bosch was a full-time employee of Limelight and PHMM, working 40 hours or more per week, until she was discharged on March 21, 1992. Testimony of Bosch. Her discharge followed adverse treatment regarding work scheduling, clothing worn to work and conduct at work, all adverse treatment being inconsistent with the treatment of male employees on the same issues. She identified the person directly responsible for this treatment as the manager, Lee Cox, who made hostile comments regarding bodily functions, body size and shape, "craziness" of pregnant women, the certainty that as a pregnant woman Bosch would be

³ Although no formal filing of the outcome of that motion is in this record, the hearing examiner has been advised that the motion to reopen was denied by the bankruptcy court. There being no evidence or notice of any action by the bankruptcy court reopening the bankruptcy, the bankruptcy court is presumed to have denied it.

taking too many breaks, would not look appropriate in the uniform, and could not properly tuck in her shirt with her stomach hanging out. The hostile treatment and adverse employer action followed her notification of her pregnancy to the employer. Testimony of Bosch.

- 6. Bosch made approximately \$200.00 per week prior to the adverse actions of Cox, would have continued to earn the same amount, plus tips of approximately \$20.00 per shift, from her discharge until September 15, 1992, when (had she still been employed) she would have then commenced earning \$240.00 per week (after a raise from \$5.00 per hour to \$6.00 per hour). Testimony of Bosch.
- 7. Bosch planned to take no more than a six week maternity leave, because she could not afford to take more time off. Her child was born on July 20, 1992. She could have returned to work six weeks later, on September 15, 1992. Testimony of Bosch.
- 8. Bosch was not expecting to be fired. She suffered and displayed emotional distress in mood swings, increased stress due to the financial strain upon the household, loss of sleep, and anger and resentment because she felt she had been wrongly fired--punished for being pregnant. Her relationship with her husband deteriorated (he ultimately committed suicide). Bosch experienced financial hardship and genuine privation from the loss of income. Although some of the debt problems and relationship problems existed before Bosch's discharge, the evidence is clear and convincing that loss of her job for no good cause magnified her problems and inflicted substantial emotional distress upon her. At the time of hearing Bosch had not yet gotten out of the emotional "hole" into which she fell when she was fired. Testimony of Bosch, Justin Lewis and Margaret Olson.
- 9. Bosch expended \$300.00 in job-hunting costs--paying for car gas and maintenance, extra make-up and "nice" maternity outfits to seek employment. Testimony of Bosch.
- 10. Bosch made reasonable and proper attempts to find work. On April 1, 1993, she obtained a full-time job with comparable wages and comparable tips. Testimony of Bosch.
- 11. Bosch lost, by reason of the respondents' wrongful acts of discrimination that culminated in her discharge, \$300.00 for miscellaneous job-hunting expenses. She lost wages from March 21, 1992, through July 20, 1992 and from September 15, 1992, to April 1, 1993,

for a total wage loss of \$10,172.00. She lost tips for the same periods, for a tip earning loss of \$4,530.00. Her wage losses total \$14,702.00.

- 12. Lacking clear evidence of pay dates, the interest calculation on lost earnings will be set from July 20, 1992, for the earlier period of loss, and from April 1, 1993, for the remainder. Interest accrued at \$1.44 per day from July 20, 1992 through March 31, 1993 (.10 times \$5,250.00 divided by 365). Interest accrued at \$2.59 per day from April 1, 1993, to the present (.10 times \$14,702.00 divided by 365).
- 13. Bosch suffered emotional distress that was severe. Her lost job precipitated extreme consequences in her home life, for her child, in her sense of self-esteem, and certainly increased the strain in her marriage (although her husband's suicide was not proved to result from her job loss). Her demeanor and testimony credibly support a finding of extreme emotional distress directly resulting from her loss of her livelihood, in the sum of \$15,000.00.

IV. Opinion

Sanctions

This contested case involved sanctions from fairly early in its progression. Respondents moved for a dismissal in March of 1997, within four months of service of the corporations and Martin Anderson, and within a month of service of Nainesh Patel. The dismissal motion relied upon a completed bankruptcy proceeding by Professional Hotel & Motel Management. Case No. 92-30129-11, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of Montana.

From that early motion through hearing, although respondents continued to insist until the closing remarks of the hearing that the bankruptcy foreclosed this case, respondents steadfastly refused to provide full and complete discovery responses. Without the facts of the relationships between Anderson and Patel and the corporate entities, Bosch could not adequately respond to the bankruptcy defense, and was virtually without facts to verify or discard her "alter ego" claims against Anderson and Patel. Sanctions imposed upon the respondents for their prolonged failure to address their deficient discovery responses, coupled with the withdrawal of the bankruptcy defense, left Anderson and Patel exposed to joint and several liability with the corporate defendants.

It remains unclear to what degree Anderson and Patel were actually involved in the discriminatory acts. But they alone have the evidence to clear up that uncertainty. Refusal to provide the evidence justifies both sanctions and a presumption that the evidence they have declined to provide would weigh against them. §26-1-602(5) and (6) MCA.

Pregnancy Discrimination is a Violation of the Montana Human Rights Act

The Montana Maternity Leave Act makes it unlawful to terminate a woman's employment because of her pregnancy. §49-2-310 MCA. Respondents clearly fired Bosch because she was pregnant. Pregnancy discrimination is necessarily discrimination against females, and is therefore sex discrimination. *Miller-Wohl Co., Inc. v. Commissioner*, 214 Mont. 238, 692 P.2d 1243 (1984); *vac'd and remanded*, 479 U.S. 1050, 107 S.Ct. 919, 93 L.Ed.2d 972 (1987); *jdgmnt reinst'd*, 228 Mont. 505, 744 P.2d 871. Discrimination in employment based on sex is a violation of the Montana Human Rights Act. §49-2-303 MCA.

Damages

In terms of damages, Bosch established her lost wages by clear and credible testimony that was not effectively rebutted.⁴ Interest at the statutory rate of 10% per annum, is proper. *P. W. Berry Co. v. Freese*, 239 Mont. 183, 779 P.2d 521, 523 (1989); *Foss v. J.B. Junk*, Case No. SE84-2345 (Montana Human Rights Commission, 1987). The Commission awards prejudgment interest either from the date the wages would have been paid, *P. W. Berry Co.*, *op. cit.*, or from the hearing date, *Amstutz v. Mountain Bell*, Case No. HpE80-1235 (Montana Human Rights Commission, 1986). When the amount lost and the accrual date for it are proved, interest from the due date is proper. *P. W. Berry Co.*, *supra*, *Foss*, *supra*.

Once a violation has been proven under state or federal civil rights statutes, then emotional harm is compensable if the claimant establishes that (1) distress, humiliation, embarrassment or other emotional harm actually occurred, and (2) the harm was proximately

⁴ If Bosch received UI benefits that now must be refunded, the matter is between the Department and Bosch, and does not accord any offset or diminution in liability for respondents.

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27 28 caused by the unlawful conduct of the respondent.⁵ The testimony of the injured party alone can establish compensable emotional harm from a civil rights violation, Johnson v. Hale, 942 F.2d 1192 (9th Cir. 1991), and sometimes harm can be inferred from the circumstances.⁶

The award for emotional distress in this case is the same as that awarded in Arrotta v. V. K. Putman, Inc., HRC Case Nos. 9101004544 and 9109004736 (Spt. 29, 1993). For other such awards, see, Stensvad v. Towe, 232 Mont. 378, 759 P.2d 138 (1988) (\$5,000 for mental anguish evidenced by family testimony of embarrassment, sleeplessness, reluctance to go to Rotary Club meetings); Brookshire v. Harley Phillips, et al., op. cit. (\$20,000 award as a result of sexual harassment in the workplace); Webb v. City of Chester, 813 F.2d 824 (7th Cir. 1987) (§1983 employment discrimination claim, \$20,250 for embarrassment and humiliation though claimant worked just two weeks); Brown v. Trustees of Boston University, 674 F.Supp. 393 (D.C. Mass. 1987) (\$15,000 award for emotional distress from loss of tenure based on sex); Paxton v. Beard, Case No. GC89-327-S-0, 58 FEP 298 (N.D. Miss. 1992) (\$15,000 award for mental distress in \$1983 action in federal court, termination due to pregnancy); Shelby v. Flipper's Billiards, HRC Case No. RPa-800185 (January 1983) (\$5,000) in denial of public accommodation on account of race); Capes v. City of Kalispell, HRC Case No. SGs83-2121 (January 1985) (\$750 for sex based refusal to register child for city baseball).

V. Conclusions of Law

1. Respondent discharged the charging party on March 21, 1992 because of her gender (pregnant female), violating §49-2-303 MCA.

⁵ See, among others: Carey v. Piphus, 435 U.S. 247, 264 at n. 20 (1978) (42 U.S.C. 1983 action, denial of voting rights); Carter v. Duncan-Huggins Ltd., 727 F.2d 1225 (D.C. Cir. 1984) (42 U.S.C. 1981, employment discrimination); Seaton v. Sky Realty Company, 491 F.2d 634 (7th Cir. 1974) (42 U.S.C. 1982, housing discrimination based on race); Brown v. Trustees of Boston University, 674 F.Supp. 393 (D.C. Mass. 1987) (unlawful denial of tenure opportunity, based on sex); Portland v. Bureau of Labor and Industry, 61 Or.Ap. 182, 656 P.2d 353 (1982), affirmed 298 Or. 104, 690 P.2d 475 (1984) (sex-based employment discrimination); Hy-Vee Food Stores v. Iowa Civil Rights Comm., 453 N.W.2d 512, 525 (Iowa, 1990) (sex and national origin discrimination).

⁶ Carter v. Duncan-Huggins, Ltd., supra [ftnt 5,]; Seaton v. Sky Realty Co., supra [ftnt 5]; Buckley Nursing Home, Inc. v. MCAD, 20 Mass.Ap.Ct. 172 (1985) (finding of discrimination alone permits inference of emotional distress as normal adjunct of employer's actions); Fred Meyer v. Bureau of Labor & Ind., 39 Or.Ap. 253, 261-262, rev. denied, 287 Ore. 129 (1979) (mental anguish is direct and natural result of illegal discrimination); Gray v. Serruto Builders, Inc., 110 N.J.Sup. 314 (1970) (indignity is compensable as the "natural, proximate, reasonable and foreseeable result" of unlawful discrimination).

- 2. Pursuant to §49-2-506(1)(b) MCA, charging party is entitled to the sum of \$15,002.00 for lost wages, tips and moving expenses, plus \$5,514.68 as prejudgment interest on the lost wages and tips through September 10, 1998. Interest shall continue to accrue on the back pay (wages and tips) at \$2.59 per day until paid. Charging party is also entitled to the sum of \$15,000.00 for extreme emotional distress. All respondents against whom judgment is entered are jointly and severally liable for the entire judgment.
- 3. Affirmative relief is necessary in this case. §§49-2-506(1)(a) and 49-3-309(1)(a), MCA. Respondents must refrain from engaging in any further unlawful discriminatory practices.
- 4. For purposes of §49-2-505(4), MCA, the charging party is the prevailing party at the hearing of this matter.

VI. Proposed Order

- 1. Judgment is hereby found in favor of the charging party and against the respondents on the charge by Polly Bosch that Limelight, Inc., Professional Hotel and Motel Management, Inc., Martin Anderson and Nainesh K. Patel terminated her employment because of her sex.
- 2. Respondents are ordered, jointly and severally, to pay to the charging party the sum of \$30,002.00 for lost wages, tips, job-seeking expenses and emotional distress, plus interest in the amount of \$5,514.68 through September 10, 1998, continuing to accrue at the rate of \$2.59 per day until paid.
- 3. Respondents, and each of them, are enjoined from taking adverse employment action against any current or future employee because of race, national origin, creed, gender, religion, color, age, disability, marital status, or political ideas and in violation of the Montana Human Rights Act.
- 4. Respondents, to the extent that each or any of them is currently doing business in Montana, are ordered to take the following affirmative actions to minimize the likelihood that they will engage in future violations of the Human Rights Act:
 - a. Within 90 days of the date of the final order in this case, each respondent shall prepare written employment policies prohibiting unlawful discrimination based on race, national origin or any other impermissible factor under state law and shall furnish copies of the

draft policies to the staff of the Human Rights Bureau for review and 1 comment: 2 b. Within 30 days after receipt of the comments of the Human Rights 3 Bureau staff and after revision of the draft policies in conformance with those comments, each respondent shall adopt those nondiscrimination 4 policies and shall then distribute a copy to all current employees; 5 c. Within 30 days of adopting the described nondiscrimination policies, each respondent shall post appropriate notices in conspicuous places 6 informing all employees and employment applicants that the respondent does not discriminate in violation of state or federal law and that further 7 information concerning their rights to be free from unlawful employment discrimination may be obtained from the offices of the 8 United States Equal Opportunity Commission, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry or other appropriate government offices; 9 d. Within 120 days after the final order in this case, each respondent 10 shall produce to the Human Rights Bureau proof to establish that its management (or the individual respondent) has obtained appropriate 11 training in human rights in employment, as required by Bureau staff. 12 Dated: September 10, 1998. 13 Terry Spear, Hearing Examiner for the 14 Montana Human Rights Commission Hearings Bureau, Montana Department of Labor and Industry 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28